



Information on Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome "SARS"

Distilled from information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, May 2004

What is SARS?

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a serious respiratory illness caused by a virus.

What are the symptoms and signs of SARS?

The illness usually begins with a fever of $\geq 100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$ or higher. A person may experience chills, headache and body aches too. Some people may experience breathing problems along with these other early symptoms. After 2 to 7 days, a person with SARS may develop a dry, nonproductive cough, have a very difficult time breathing and require hospitalization.

How long does it take for symptoms of SARS to appear?

Usually it takes 2-7 days for a person to develop symptoms after being infected with the SARS virus. In some cases it may take as long as 10 days.

How is SARS spread?

SARS is primarily spread by close contact with a person infected with the SARS virus. When a person who is ill with SARS coughs or sneezes, the virus can be spread through the air. When someone else breathes in the virus they can become infected. Touching surfaces or other items contaminated by the virus may also spread SARS. The SARS virus may also be present in the feces of an infected person. **Therefore, in addition to covering the mouth when coughing or sneezing, frequent and thorough hand washing is absolutely necessary** to prevent the spread of SARS.

Who can get SARS?

Anyone can become infected with the virus that causes SARS. Individuals who are at greatest risk for SARS are people who have direct, close contact with an infected person, such as those sharing a home with a SARS patient and health care workers providing care to persons with SARS. People who travel to other countries where SARS is a problem are at increased risk of infection.

Is there a test for SARS?

Only individuals who are ill and suspected of having SARS are tested for the virus. Routine screening for SARS is not currently recommended.

Is there a cure for or a vaccine against SARS?

No cure or vaccine is yet available. The sooner medical treatment is sought after symptoms appear, the better the chance of recovery.

What can I do to prevent becoming infected with SARS or infecting others?

- avoid unnecessary travel to countries where SARS is a problem
- do not share eating utensils, glasses, etc.
- cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you cough or sneeze
- wash your hands thoroughly and frequently

What should I do if I have been informed that I (or a member of my family) have been exposed to SARS?

Follow the directions you have been given by the health department. **If you develop any of the symptoms of SARS call your physician or the hospital emergency room immediately.** Advise them that you were exposed to SARS and have developed symptoms. **Do not go to a medical facility without calling first.** Arrangements need to be made so that you do not expose other people.

If you have questions, please call your doctor or local health department.

Central District Health Department
707 N. Armstrong Place
Boise, ID 83704
208-327-8625

Valley County Office
703 N. First Street
McCall, ID 83638
208-634-7194

Elmore County Office
520 E. 8th Street N.
Mountain Home, ID 83647
208-587-4407

Detailed information on SARS is available at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars or go to Central District Health Department's website at www.cdhd.org